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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/798,932	03/11/2004	Scott Arthur Muirhead	407500003COA	6932
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EXAMINER				
CHEN, JOSE V				
ART UNIT		PAPER NUMBER		
3637				
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Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/798,932

Applicant(s)

MUIRHEAD, SCOTT ARTHUR

Examiner

José V. Chen

Art Unit

3637

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 06 August 2009.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-37 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 1-10 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☒ Claim(s) 11-18, 37 is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 19-36 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/22)
- Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____

- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

Claims 20-25, 30, 34-36 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. Claim(s) 20-25, 30, 34-36 fail(s) to recite sufficient structural elements and interconnection of the elements to positively position and define how an inner and outer molded structure are interconnected so that an integral structure able to function as claimed is recited.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

The factual inquiries set forth in *Graham v. John Deere Co.*, 383 U.S. 1, 148 USPQ 459 (1966), that are applied for establishing a background for determining obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) are summarized as follows:

1. Determining the scope and contents of the prior art.
2. Ascertaining the differences between the prior art and the claims at issue.
3. Resolving the level of ordinary skill in the pertinent art.
4. Considering objective evidence present in the application indicating obviousness or nonobviousness.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claim 19 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Apps et al or Apps et al in view of the publications entitled "Fire and Polyvinyl Chloride" (reference "AR" in the form 1449 mailed 09/01/06) and "The Synthesis and Characterization of New Thermoplastic Fire Resistant Materials" (reference "U" of the Pto Form-892 mailed 09/01/06), respectively. The patent to Apps et al (6,006,677) teaches structure as claimed including a pallet assembly and a fire resistant layer formed upon an exterior of the pallet assembly. It is noted here that plastics including thermoplastic material provides a fire resistant layer as claimed since thermoplastic material is inherently fire resistant, for example fire resistant compared to wood or paper. Further, the first two paragraphs of the article submitted (ids filed 06-19-06 entitled "Fire and Polyvinyl Chloride" ,1996), it is stated that "Polyvinyl chloride (PVC, or vinyl) materials or products tend to have excellent fire performance properties...". Further, the article to McGrath (at least at the Abstract) suggest the same. Claim 19 states ...a fire resistant layer formed upon an exterior of said pallet assembly." The patent to Apps (thermoplastics) teaches such structure as

claimed since thermoplastic materials inherently have some resistant to fire or in the alternative Apps et al in view of the publications entitled "Fire and Polyvinyl Chloride" and "The Synthesis and Characterization of New Thermoplastic Fire Resistant Materials" as stated above. The patent structure to Apps teaches a plastic structure. In regard to a fire resistant layer, the injection molded body of Apps teaches a layer formed upon an exterior of the pallet assembly as claimed. In this regard note the following. The outer most layer or skin layer of a molded structure is formed upon an exterior of the pallet body **AS CLAIMED**. In this regard, there is no distinction between the claimed subject matter in claim 19 and the patent structure of Apps. In response to applicant's remarks regarding the inherency of plastic providing a fire resistant material, note the following. It is repeated that a plastic material provides a fire resistant material as claimed as stated above as compared to wood, paper. Applicant appears to argue degrees of fire resistance, such not being claimed. The claim simply states a fire resistant layer. In this regard, it is held that the patent to Apps teaches a fire resistant layer **AS CLAIMED**.

Claim 19 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Gronnevik or Gronnevik in view of the publications entitled "Fire and Polyvinyl Chloride" (reference "AR" in the form 1449 mailed 09/01/06) and "The Synthesis and Characterization of New Thermoplastic Fire Resistant Materials" (reference "U" of the Pto Form-892 mailed 09/01/06), respectively. The patent to Gronnevik teaches structure as claimed including a pallet assembly and a fire resistant layer formed upon an exterior of the pallet assembly. It is noted here that

plastics including thermoplastic material provides a fire resistant layer as claimed since thermoplastic material is inherently fire resistant, for example fire resistant compared to wood or paper. Further, the first two paragraphs of the article submitted (ids filed 06-19-06 entitled "Fire and Polyvinyl Chloride" ,1996), it is stated that "Polyvinyl chloride (PVC, or vinyl) materials or products tend to have excellent fire performance properties...". Further, the article to McGrath (at least at the Abstract) suggest the same. Claim 19 states "...a fire resistant layer formed upon an exterior of said pallet assembly." The patent to Gronnevik(thermoplastics) teaches such structure as claimed since thermoplastic materials inherently have some resistant to fire or in the alternative Gronnevik in view of the publications entitled "Fire and Polyvinyl Chloride" and "The Synthesis and Characterization of New Thermoplastic Fire Resistant Materials" as stated above. The pallet structure to Gronnevik teaches a plastic structure. In regard to a fire resistant layer, the injection molded body of Gronnevik teaches a layer formed upon an exterior of the pallet assembly as claimed. In this regard note the following. The outer most layer or skin layer of a molded structure is formed upon an exterior of the pallet body **AS CLAIMED**. In this regard, there is no distinction between the claimed subject matter in claim 19 and the patent structure of Gronnevik. In response to applicant's remarks regarding the inherency of plastic providing a fire resistant material, note the following. It is repeated that a plastic material provides a fire resistant material as claimed as stated above as compared to wood, paper. Applicant appears to argue degrees of fire resistance, such not being claimed. The claim simply states a fire

resistant layer. In this regard, it is held that the patent to Gronnevik teaches a fire resistant layer **AS CLAIMED**.

Claim 22 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gronnevik. The patent to Gronnevik teaches structure substantially as claimed, as discussed above, including a pallet shell half (3), second pallet shell half (4) fused together, a support structure. The placement of a support member or the dimension of a shell are matters of desirability which would have been obvious and well within the level of ordinary skill in the art, thereby providing structure as claimed and further would have been predictable.

Claims 20, 21,23, 24, 25, 26, 27 and claims 28-36 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gronnevik in view of Ford et al. The patent to Gronnevik teaches structure substantially as claimed including a fire resistant pallet, the only difference being that the pallet does not include a mixture of intumescent material. However, the patent to Ford et al teaches the use of providing intumescent compositions of plastic to provide a protective layer for a structure. It would have been obvious at the time of the invention to modify the structure of Gronnevik to include a mixture of intumescent plastic material to provide a protective layer for a structure, as taught by Ford et al since such structures are used for the same intended purpose, thereby providing structure as claimed. The percentages or ratios of mixture is a matter experimentation which would have been obvious and well within the level of ordinary skill in the art and would have been predictable, thereby providing structure as claimed.

It is noted that the method to which a utility structure is formed carried no weight in a utility claim.

In regard to claims 28-36, note the following. It is repeated that the method to which a structure is formed carries no weight in a utility claim. It is noted in this regard that the ending structure must either expressly teach the end product or be an obvious modification. The patent to Gronnevik teaches a pallet structure with a molded polyolefin interior and exterior surface as claimed., the difference being that the exterior surface doesn't include a fire resistant material having superior fire resistance relative to the interior surface. However, the patent to Ford teaches providing fire resistance properties including providing a additive or mixture to plastics that is coated or impregnated which would suggest providing such mixture to any plastics structure to resist fire.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 11-18, 37 are allowable over the prior art of record.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments filed 08/06/09 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. It is unclear as to how a co extruded outer structure and the co extruded inner structure are interconnected so as to provide an end product different than the above rejections.

Conclusion

Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP

§ 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to José V. Chen whose telephone number is (571)272-6865. The examiner can normally be reached on m-f,m-th 5:30am-3:00pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Lanna Mai can be reached on (571)272-6867. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

José V. Chen
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 3637

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